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ART. X. — 1. *La Légende des Siècles.* Par VICTOR HUGO. 2 vols. Paris: Michel Levy.
2. *Souvenirs de* MME. RÉCAMIER. 2 vols. Paris: Michel Levy.
3. *Souvenirs d'un Journaliste.* Par ST. MARC GIRARDIN. Paris: Michel Levy.
4. *Mme. Swetchine, sa Vie et ses Œuvres.* Par le COMTE DE FALLOUX. 2 vols. Paris: Didier.
5. *De la Monarchie Française.* Par M. DE CARNÉ. Paris: Didier.
6. *Essai sur le Génie de Pindare.* By VILLEMAIN. Paris: Didier.
7. *Entretien sur M. Thiers.* By LAMARTINE.

OUR instalment of books from the French press this quarter is finer and richer than it has been for a long time. We have almost simultaneously works from Victor Hugo, Villemain, Lamartine, and St. Marc Girardin. We confess, too, that the subjects attract us no less than the authors. To go no further than the first three, we find in them three of the component elements of modern French civilization, — literature, journalism, and that peculiar and condensed form of social existence in France termed a *salon.*

About no poet, past or present, or in any country, has so large an amount of discussion been carried on as about Victor Hugo. The school of "Classiques" in France declared him a "barbarian," in the name of Racine and Boileau, and in the beginning they vowed they could not understand him; but, though objecting to his phraseology, and professing themselves shocked by his principles, even his worst enemies never denied his extraordinary poetic fire and force. He was called exaggerated, subversive, perverse, mad; but it was never opined that he was not a poet. All this strange effervescence has calmed down now, and, in the face of the general admission of his genius, Hugo himself has thrown aside much that was intended simply to secure notoriety. We doubt whether the men of this generation in France would be well able to conceive of the amount of opposition with which their fathers met such literary perturbators as were Hugo's early

dramas. These have been so outdone now by men without the master's power, that, when we turn back to the master himself, we are struck by that inseparable companion of power, — self-possession. Hugo always did what he chose to do. He might be mistaken; it might often have been better had he chosen to do otherwise than as he did; but he executed as he pleased what it pleased him to execute.

Perhaps the first work of Hugo which was met by a public unanimous in its praise was wrung from his inmost soul by the direst indignation, — *Les Châtiments*. Of this volume we will not now speak, having commented on it at the time of its publication. It was followed after three years by the two volumes entitled *Les Contemplations*, a work decidedly inferior to its predecessor, yet of great beauty and merit. Since its appearance Victor Hugo's Muse had remained mute, till now that her voice has suddenly broken upon the world in what we would fain call "*awfully beautiful*" strains. Nothing finer than certain parts of *La Légende des Siècles* was ever conceived or written, while in other parts we discover faults of the writer's earlier days, which we find in none of his intermediate productions. This book is the counterpart of *Les Châtiments*, not to say the reaction of the mind that produced the latter. *Les Châtiments* was the result of one of the noblest bursts of indignation that ever relieved an honest, aching heart. *La Légende des Siècles* is due to the mournful longing with which the poet, turning from what surrounds him in the present, looks far, far down the fathomless gulf of the past, and catches at sun-gleams, and clamors for something which it may be permitted him not to condemn or scorn. Chivalry inspires Hugo this time, and so evidently that what precedes and what follows the chivalrous era is incomparably inferior to what treats simply of those ages which, if "dark," were full of *naïveté* and simple truth. The Christian knight, such as some Northern bards of earlier ages have pictured him, is the perpetual ideal of this new work, and it is curious enough, that, while Tennyson is, in England, chanting the praises of "the blameless king" in his Idyls, Hugo, so diametrically his opposite in every possible respect, personal and artistic, is also accepting as his type of poetic per-

fection, the product of a remote period of civilization, whose charm is the union of gentleness and force.

This type — the type of the Christian knight — recurs in almost every page of *La Légende des Siècles*. We have it in Rodrigues de Bivar, whom a Moorish prince finds humbly rubbing down his father's mare, — him, the Cid, so "haughty at the court of the king!" We have it in Eviradnus, the aged warrior whose mission it is to "protect the weak against the strong," and to console the suffering, and who delivers the Lady Maud of Lusatia from a cruel emperor and a licentious king. We have it in Ratbert, where a true-hearted, faith-keeping prince is the victim of a tyrant and usurper, and is avenged by an archangel, who descends from the sky to slay the traitor, revealing his heavenly presence only to a poor patient monk, who by his virtues has deserved to contemplate the reality of higher truths. We have it in the noble appeal of the Alpine Eagle to the Heraldic Eagle on the banners of the Swiss mercenary Guard; and in the child-like simplicity of Aymerillot, the boy-hero, who, when all Charlemagne's peers have refused to take the town of Narbonne for gain (they being glutted and worn out), offers to take it for glory (he being poor and full of strength). Everywhere this type starts up before us, seizes hold of us, and makes us share the author's own feeling, when he turns from the narrowness, corruption, and feebleness of the European men of our day to the large-heartedness, generosity, and vigor of the men of the past. There is in this collection, however, one small poem in which no type comes forth, unless, indeed, we recognize the tyrant type in the Inquisitor-king, Philip II., who gloomily rests his head on one of the window-panes of the palace of Aranjuez. But the poem — one of the shortest — is so lovely that we must give our readers a nearer knowledge of it. It is entitled *La Rose de l'Infante*, and the anecdote it tells is merely this. In the year 1588, a young daughter of Philip II., a child of five years old, is standing in the gardens of Aranjuez.

> "Elle est toute petite, une duègne la garde;
> Elle tient à la main une rose, et regarde.
> Quoi? que regarde-t-elle? Elle ne sait pas. L'Eau,
> Un bassin qu'assombrit le pin et le bouleau,

Ce qu'elle a devant elle, un cygne aux ailes blanches,
Le bercement des flots sous la chanson des branches.
. . . . . .
Un jour elle sera Duchesse de Brabant;
Elle gouvernera la Flandre ou la Sardaigne,
Elle est Infante, elle a cinq ans, *elle dédaigne.*"

While this child loiters on the edge of a garden-pond, her stately duenna at her side, and a rose in her hand, Philip is at a window of his palace with his hard eyes fixed upon the setting sun.

"L'effroi
Faisait une lumière étrange autour du roi.
. . . . . .
Il tenait l'Amérique et l'Inde; il s'appuyait
Sur l'Afrique, il regnait sur l'Europe; inquiet
Seulement du côté de la sombre Angleterre."

The day is the day fatal to Spain, and the hour that when her most ambitious hopes were destroyed, not by an enemy, but by that "Providence" which the gloomy Philip himself said, after the disaster, "it was not his intention to struggle against." All is tranquil in the gardens, in the air, in the sky; all rests in peace under the last red glance of the dying sun, unless, indeed, it may be the sad, restless, ruthless heart of the son of Charles V.

"Le jour s'éteint; les nids chuchotent, querelleurs;
Les pourpres du couchant sont dans les branches d'arbres,
La rougeur monte au front des déesses de marbre."

We ask special attention to the exquisite beauty of this description of a Southern sunset.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this tranquillity, a breath stirs, and it is as though the spirits of earth and air began to rouse themselves from the pressure with which the day's heat had weighed them down. The king, at his palace window, looks out into the coming shade, and calculates how surely his "invincible Armada" will crush proud Protestant Albion. He actually smiles at the thought of all his awful, death-bearing ships, now riding on the sea, and just about to enwrap the heretic race and stifle it in their fearful wings. He thinks of all the soldiers who animate the ships,—

"Sur quatre cents vaisseaux quatre-vingt mille épées,"—

as he gazes at the waning light. Then a breath rises. The whole of the closing passage is too beautiful for us not to give it to our readers entire.

" Sur le bord du bassin, en silence,
L'Infante tient toujours sa rose gravement,
Et, doux ange aux yeux bleus, la baise par moment.
Soudain, un souffle d'air, une de ces haleines
Que le soir frémissant jette à travers les plaines,
Tumultueux zéphyr, effleurant l'horizon,
Trouble l'eau, fait frémir les joncs, met un frisson
Dans les lointains massifs de myrte et d'asphodèle
Vient jusqu'au bel enfant tranquille, et d'un coup d'aile
Rapide, et secouant même l'arbre voisin,
Effeuille brusquement la fleur dans le bassin,
Et l'Infante n'a plus dans la main qu'une épine.
Elle se penche, et voit sur l'eau cette ruine
Elle ne comprend pas ; *qu'est ce donc ? Elle a peur ;*
Et la voilà qui cherche au ciel avec stupeur
Cette brise, qui n'a pas craint de lui déplaire.
Que faire ? le bassin semble plein de colère ;
Lui, si clair tout à l'heure, il est noir maintenant ;
Il a des vagues ; c'est une mer bouillonnant.
Toute la pauvre rose est éparse sur l'onde ;
Les cent feuilles, que noie et roule l'eau profonde,
Tournoyant, naufrageant, s'en vont de tous côtés
Sur mille petits flots par la brise irrités ;
On croit voir dans un gouffre une flotte qui sombre.
— ' Madame,' dit la duègne, avec sa face d'ombre,
A la petite fille étonnée et rêvant,
' Tout sur terre appartient aut princes, hors le vent.' "

We know of few more profoundly poetical, and at the same time philosophical, conceptions than this. Every intellectual requirement is satisfied by the matter of the tale, and every artistic demand by its manner. The destruction of the mighty fleet which carried the destinies of empires, shadowed forth by the whisper of the wind over mimic waves which shatters a flower in the hand of a wondering child, — this seems to us one of the loftiest and loveliest ideas to be found among modern poets. As to the execution, it is above all remarkable for that perfect mastery of the author over his subject, for that complete self-possession, to which we alluded. We cannot help expressing a wish that Longfellow — than whom there lives no greater master of artistic form — would consecrate some of his

leisure hours to the translation of certain poems of *La Légende des Siècles*. Meanwhile we congratulate French poetry on so brilliant an accession to its contemporary treasures.

All the really distinguished men of France are of nearly the same age, and radiated into the effulgence of their fame near the same period. When St. Marc Girardin was thirty, Hugo was four or five and twenty, Villemain forty, and so on. They form a group, therefore, though nothing can be more various than their faculties, or the direction given to them, — often, indeed, nothing more mutually contradictory than their opinions and mental tendencies. French literature owes some of its most refined and most ingenious pages to M. St. Marc Girardin, who is undoubtedly foremost among those whose influence on the national thought in France made it what it was, in its brightest period, some thirty-five or forty years ago.

Those of his writings which are collected in the volume under our notice are of great political interest, for they relate to, and elucidate, the events that occurred in France when the Revolution of July was imminent or in progress. As our readers will hardly need to be reminded, the movement, which began about 1827, was conducted almost exclusively by newspaper writers. If ever a great political commotion was produced by journalism, this was the force which in July, 1830, overthrew the Bourbons of the elder branch. The journalistic force was called into action by various other latent causes; but had there not been at that particular period in Paris (for Paris is, was, and always will be France) a corps of intelligent, eloquent, active, enterprising, ambitious, and influential journalists, the "three days" of 1830 could no more have taken place, than could the *coup d'état* of December had not a desperate, brutal, corrupt, narrow-minded, and perfectly disciplined army been ready at hand. The *hyper-thinkers* of 1830 were the agents of the Revolution of July, as thoroughly as the *no-thinkers* of December were the agents of the *coup d'état* of 1851. It is, therefore, as interesting to examine the character of the journalist, as bearing upon the shortcomings of the Orleans monarchy, resulting in despotism, as it will one day be to study the character of the swashbuckler and

traineur de sabre as bearing upon the oppressions of the Empire. Nowhere do we find such materials for the close and impartial study of the journalist as in M. St. Marc's volume. It is impossible to carry honesty of purpose farther than he does, or to confess more candidly the defects of the predominant body to which he belonged, and whose errors lie at the root of so much evil. He does not hesitate to admit the deplorable lack of statesmanship shown by the men whom mere journalism brought suddenly to the head of affairs in 1830, and he deals with his own inexperience and its mischievous consequences as severely as with that of any one else. Alluding to his own "damaging" articles against the government of Charles X., he writes as follows: —

"I perceive in re-reading and examining my polemics of the time of the Restoration, — from the year 1827 to the year 1830, — that I devoted considerable hatred to M. de Villèle. Now, if I had to judge M. de Villèle at the present moment, I should say of him only what we all chose to repeat then, with contemptuous impartiality, namely, that he was 'a good steward.' I should say that, under a monarchy whose worst fault was the *desire to remain antiquated*, he was the one man who was most imbued with the spirit of our own times. He was perhaps not so much a *liberal* as he was a *modern* minister. He sincerely loved the representative form of government, to which he owed it that he was a minister, and he sought by every means in his power to make his party love it. He succeeded ill. All the distinguished men of the Royalist party loved representative institutions, — Chateaubriand, M. de Villèle, M. Lainé, M. de Richelieu, M. de Martignac, M. de Fitzjames, — I speak of the elders only, — but the *mass* of the party did not like them. . . . . M. de Villèle's ministry was the best essay made to liberalize the monarchy of 1814 without the help of the extreme liberals themselves. This was precisely what the 'Liberals' and their chiefs could the least forgive."

Now, in lending his powerful pen to the chiefs of the extreme Liberal party, — who, as he now sees, were following only a cruelly selfish policy, — to "write down" M. de Villèle, M. St. Marc Girardin was, through sheer inexperience, helping to do his country, and ultimately his own cause, very great disservice.

We pass to something far less excusable. One of the worst

features of the movement of July (and for this we refer our readers to M. Guizot's eloquently reproving pages) was the senseless bloodthirstiness of the populace with respect to the king's ministers, of whose position with regard to Parliament they knew little, and of whose acts they knew less. They clamored for the execution of these men, as they would have done for the performance of some new piece. They were not in earnest in their reprobation, for they ignored entirely the bases on which it might be founded; they were in earnest only in their insane craving for a new spectacle, a fresh excitement, no matter at what cost. Now, what says M. St. Marc Girardin?

"I partook of the emotions and of the joys of the Revolution of July; I felt in my own person all the collective passion of the hour. I will not even hide an episode of my journalistic life, for it has its moral. On the 29th of July, some of my comrades and myself were assembled in the office of the *Journal des Débats*, and occupied in hurriedly writing a few lines descriptive of the events of a revolution that was in progress at the very instant at which we were narrating it. I wrote upon some of the measures that ought to be adopted immediately after the victory, and, among others, I called for the punishment of the ministers of Charles X.; but in the preoccupation of such a time, instead of writing the word *punishment*, I wrote — and I shudder even now when it recurs to me — I wrote the word *execution*. I went away, oblivious of the fatal expression I had suffered to escape from my pen, and I read only on the morrow the lines I had noted down the day before. When I came to the passage in question, the fearful word had vanished, and the proper one, *punishment*, had replaced it. I owed the change to our excellent editor, M. Bertin. But the fact of the substitution of one word for the other recalled to my mind what I had in reality done, and my grief was such that tears filled my eyes. I flew to M. Bertin, and poured forth my heart to him in thanks. Observe, too, that *three months later I would, in the ranks of the National Guard, have given my life to save that of the king's ministers.* Their *execution!!* How could I ever have written such a word? Here lies one of the dangers of newspaper-writing. Words drop from the pen as from the orator's lips; they are heedlessly flung upon the paper, and when, on the morrow, that paper represents them, you are horrified at their aspect. To what have they not grown! how have they become charged with evil! My gratitude to M. Bertin for this service is augmented in exact proportion to my deep remorse. 'My dear friend,' he said to me, 'I in

fact only set down the word you would have yourself wished to see written.' True, but if he had failed to write it?"

The book consecrated to Madame Récamier by her niece, Mme. Lenormand, treats of an entirely different order of subjects. It is the history of the connecting link between the society of the old and the society of the new school in France. Mme. Récamier's was the last, as Mme. Rambouillet's was the first *salon* in which was practised, in its supreme perfection, what the French so pride themselves upon, — the art of talking, — *La Causerie*. A dispassionate study of modern French history will show us the Restoration as the only period of the last eighty years during which all classes in France threw themselves earnestly into political life, and came to enjoy its excitement. At a later period, the aristocratic classes chose to think themselves excluded from it, and then commenced those lamentable divisions and subdivisions of which France is far from having yet seen the end; but in the fifteen years of the Restoration every man of the upper and middle classes thought he had a political future, and political activity absorbed what had before been the element of *salon* life. From the reign of Louis XVIII. to the *coup d'état* of 1851, *salons* ceased to have their former significancy, and when one was closed, no other replaced it. With Mme. Récamier the institution ends. We omit extracts from these *Souvenirs* of her reign, for there is very little of her own in the work; and we should be at a loss to point out this page or that as more interesting than any other. But the whole book is curious, and full of information for those persons who wish to form an accurate notion of what the state of society in France was, till within a dozen years, and of what proportion of the ideas, habits, and prejudices of the past is still preserved.

At the same time with Mme. Récamier there flourished in Paris another lady, less universally known perhaps, but, where known, almost worshipped, and possessed of a singular and irresistible influence, — Madame Swetchine.

The life of Mme. Swetchine is so intimately connected with much of the very highest importance that is passing at the present hour in France, that we think our readers may not re-

gard a few moments as wasted in obtaining a nearer view of it. We all know how, since the quarrels of Jesuit and Jansenist, under Louis XIV., France has been divided into Gallicans and Romans, liberal Catholics and Ultramontanists. At the very hour at which we write, the question is coming to what is vulgarly called "a head," and any day may witness an outbreak of such a spiritual war in France as would not have been thought possible by a superficial observer. All this has been lying latent in the national bosom for many years, and, to those who cared to mark its existence, signs were incontestably evident of the energy that was accumulating for a renewal, one day, of the old struggle. The actors only in the drama were a little changed. Instead of Jesuits and Jansenists were fierce, bigoted, narrow-minded, ignorant, superstitious Ultramontanists, on the one hand, (Ultramontanism being with them, in reality, a mere pretext for sheer obscurantism,) and on the other, all liberal Christian Catholics, — Gallicans, in a word; for, as has been wisely said, "Gallicanism is the measure of Catholicism that the French can support." Now, it is to be remarked, that, while the Ultramontanists were firmly united, their opponents were divided; or rather they were, from many causes, deprived of one of their main supports,— the "Christian-philosophical" school, the school of spiritualist philosophers, at whose head stood Victor Cousin, and others of that stamp. Were these to be esteemed "Christian and Catholic" enough to take rank with the Gallican Catholics? This was an intensely important question, and the answer to it has never been decidedly given, until now that the attitude of the Emperor towards Rome has firmly united all Catholics, of whatsoever denomination or degree, — Jesuits, Gallicans, "Christians," Spiritualists, Cartesians, ultra-Papists, and all. This, however, is an extraordinary, and therefore probably a transient state of things. The more interesting subject to examine into is the success of the efforts at good understanding made, in an ordinary and normal period, by the two rival forces of Ecclesiastical Authority and Free Thought.

These efforts were made most conscientiously and unremittingly, and both sides counted some of the highest intellectual names of French civilization; for the pure Gallicans, Mont-

alembert, the Prince de Broglie, the Bishop of Orleans ; * for the "Spiritualists," Cousin, Villemain, Rémusat, and others of their stamp. The meeting-place for all was the *salon* of Mme. Swetchine. There, whoever loved the human intellect and its works was sure of a hearty welcome. The first thing in the remarkable person we are speaking of was without doubt her idolatry of the human mind, her deep, worshipful love for what she held to be the most wondrous of all the Divine creations, — the intellect which conceives, and for ever reverts to what is grandest and noblest. For the ordinary run of the people, who make up the mass of so-called "society," Mme. Swetchine was, above all, a woman whose virtue and sanctity surpassed anything they knew of; she humbly, cheerfully, trustfully, as they all knew, partook of the communion every day of her life, and to them she was merely and exclusively a saint. But her importance in France — and it was a great importance — was as the connecting-link between the exclusively Catholic Christians and the Christian Spiritualists. Mme. Swetchine's piety was of benefit to herself, to her conscience, to her own immortal soul, — so of course must those think whose faith and creed were hers ; but her liberality of opinion, her lofty-heartedness, her high-mindedness, her breadth of comprehension, her acuteness of vision, her absolutely unlimited tolerance of, and respect for, every conviction, provided it were sincere, — these were matters of benefit to the public ; and the death of this extraordinarily gifted being † has been a misfortune for the world of thought and intellect in France. Mme. Swetchine was, as it were, an incarnation of Leibnitz's famous discourse upon the "Accordance of Reason and Faith." She was a tangible, living proof of all the intellectual freedom that is compatible with almost mystical piety, and of the unbounded tolerance that may co-exist with indefatigably ardent religious zeal. The life of Mme. Swetchine is inseparable from one of the most curious moral and intellectual movements of the last quarter of a century in France. The sudden and *angry* union just now produced among all shades of "believers in Chris-

* We allude to the time before the dissensions with Rome had made "Papists" of all. At that time the Bishop of Orleans was a Gallican.

† Mme. Swetchine died in 1858, at an advanced age.

tianity" in France, is due to the violence of their antagonism to another power; — it is a union *in odium tertii;* — it might be dissolved by the disappearance of the cause that provokes it. The union of the "Believers" and "Thinkers," of which Mme. Swetchine was the untiringly generous, piously impassioned promoter, was a union of strong reciprocal sympathy, which could only have grown closer every hour, because it rested upon what is highest, most active, most prolific, and most susceptible of development in man, his *reason*, — that reason of which it should be remembered (as it seldom is by the Catholics) the Council of Trent has said, that it "suffices" for the recognition of divine and revealed truths.

We know of no one, of any opinion or creed, to whom we do not earnestly recommend the perusal of M. de Falloux's two volumes on Mme. Swetchine. Much is there to be learned, of which few persons, perhaps, even guess.

Among the names prominent in the society of Mme. Swetchine we find that of M. de Carné, and she had, perhaps, few more liberal or more intelligent disciples. M. de Carné's life has been devoted to the history of the institutions of his country; and it would be impossible for any one now, in any tongue or land, to contemplate writing a History of France, without having recourse to him. In his works on *Representative Government* and *Parliamentary Customs*, on the *Founders of French Unity* and on the *Monarchy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, M. de Carné leaves no stone unturned that may conceal even the most apparently insignificant fact or detail. But of all his many works, few seem to us to have the importance of his last, namely, *Considerations on the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century.* This is the complement of M. de Tocqueville's universally read book upon the *Ancien Régime.* It is impossible, when M. de Carné's volume has been attentively studied, not to see the inevitableness of the Revolution of 1789–93; difficult, when it has *not* been so studied, to discern clearly what defects in the working of the monarchical forces produced the explosion of the revolutionary ones, as a natural consequence.

The minute examination of the character of Louis XIV., as the grand precursor of the Revolution, has been gradually

becoming a favorite employment with the politicians and historians of France; and it is self-evident that nothing so far contributed to make the Revolution unavoidable as did the unconsciously subversive measures of the *Grand Roi*, whom all sovereigns have been wont to regard as a model. When that fatal and (in a king's mouth) absurd speech, "I am the State," had once been uttered, the possible future of a monarchy that might endure by the modifications of Constitutionalism, was closed. There remained nothing for it then but to choose between royal and popular despotism, between a monarch and a mob; but the form in which despotism could incarnate itself (let its vital principle be royalist or republican) was made ready to the hand of future tyrants by the arch-centralizer, Louis XIV. No sovereign, not even the first Napoleon, was so possessed by the positive rage for centralization as was Louis XIV.; and when he had once fashioned the machine (which he and his ministers passed their lives in doing), it was comparatively easy for any other power to work it. So the Revolution found the case; and, thanks to the comprehensive formula, "I am the State," it depended merely upon the obtaining of authority in the town of Paris, to subject all France to no matter what, in four-and-twenty hours. *Eighteenth Brumaires*, of various descriptions, fill the modern history of France; and it is hard to see how it should be otherwise, for the temptation to try them is too great to be resisted.

No one has brought the details of the invention of the centralization system home to Louis XIV. so irrefutably as M. de Carné, and we know nowhere of a portrait of the hard-working, second-rate conscientious, pig-headed, straightforward, honest, and intensely mischief-bringing monarch that can, in any degree, be compared to his. Alluding to the passion for *unity*, by which the king was tormented, the volume before us has the following: —

"Forever inspired by the thought of unity that was the very breath of the king's nostrils, the Minister Colbert aimed at unity in every one of his conceptions. Quite assured that he should find his master's support wherever this bent of his inclination led him, Colbert was the first to attack the old territorial divisions of the soil, created by history or

mere accident. The termination of this struggle was reserved, one hundred years later, for the *Assemblée Constituante;* but it was commenced by Colbert, and there can be no doubt that both he and his sovereign would have approved the work of *Provincial* destruction that was achieved by the Revolution. . . . . Unity was sought for everywhere. From 1665 to 1667 the king himself, in spite of his external wars and his domestic preoccupations, presided over the labors of the learned commissioners he had appointed to bring together into one harmonious whole the various legislative measures and customs whereby his different possessions were administered, and to blend the several parts into one *indivisible* subjection to his own monodespotic sway. The Parliaments resisted long and manfully, but the will of the prince was not to be conquered, and the result of the whole was that *Code Louis*, so forgotten now, but which was simply the prototype of the more notorious *Code Napoléon* that sprang from the particular phase of the Revolution called the 'Empire.' . . . . .

"It is probable that Louis XIV. would have been much surprised if he had been told that his work was a 'revolutionary' one, and that a revolution must be the consequence of the inauguration of a condition of things in which the middle classes (*la bourgeoisie*), after being everywhere called into political and administrative activity, were not placed in society on a footing of equality with the *noblesse.* For this was the king's work. Disliking the nobility, which allowed itself to be degraded by him, Louis XIV. showed everywhere the tendency to employ the *bourgeois* in situations of authority and responsibility. But this naturally produced results which, at a later period, shook the entire social edifice to its basis. Evidently, if, apart from its terrors, the public and political achievements of the Revolution could have been foreshadowed to the mind of Louis XIV., he would have welcomed it cordially, and regarded it as the fruit of his own efforts, as the offspring of his own intimate thought. . . . . .

"In the curious Utopia of a democratico-monarchical state, imagined by a sovereign and his instruments, such as Colbert and Louvois, the popular forms and liberties all disappear; old established local magistracies are abolished, parliaments and provincial councils are destroyed, and the very time-honored denominations of Provinces themselves are effaced before what we believe to have been the uniform chess-board squaring-off into 'Departments' originated by the Revolution. The nation abdicates, and is absorbed in the state; the people merges in the king. One man is and can be everything. . . . . Never did any prince labor so hard for a result, the mortal enemy of which posterity was to decide him to have been. For fifty-

four years, through all vicissitudes, Louis XIV. evinced a passionate earnestness for subjecting all classes in the country to the yoke of civil equality, and for centralizing the national life of France in the pigeon-holes of his different ministries. He was, if not the most clear-sighted, at least the most active agent in the social transformation that was impending, and this only a close study of our past annals can enable us thoroughly to understand. Our history alone can elucidate the work of the Revolution; for by its light we see the Revolution as it really was, — a dire necessity, — and far less a protest against past ages than their own natural, inevitable legacy."

In his way of proving the above assertion, M. de Carné makes the foreign reader acquainted with a profusion of the most curious and hitherto unfamiliar facts. His "History of the French Monarchy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" is indispensable to whomsoever wishes to know accurately what brought the Revolution about; and so have judged the historical and political writers of France, — many of them diametrically opposed to M. de Carné on the questions of the current policy of the country at this day.

It seems at first a somewhat strange transition to turn from politics to poetry; but the work we have now to deal with not only places poetry above everything else, but declares it to lie as the root of everything glorious or great. M. Villemain's "Treatise on Lyric Poetry," as the second title of "Pindar" runs, maintains that there can be nothing worthy of note in the history of man apart from enthusiasm, and it is the noble declaration of this celebrated æsthetic philosopher, that "mankind cannot be, and enthusiasm die away"; indeed, if we are rightly informed, M. Villemain has characterized his new work as "a history of the influence of enthusiasm on the human race."

The book which has ended in so wide and high a meaning was born of a purely special aim. Many years ago, it was proposed by the *Académie Française* that a prize should be given for the most successful translation of Pindar. Numberless attempts were made, all more or less unsuccessful; and invariably, while each translator was proving his incompetency to the task, M. Villemain, who knows every line of his Greek classics by heart to this day, was always to be heard muttering

the original, and impatiently whispering, "If they would only be content to give us the word-for-word version!" * And when the trial was over (a severe trial mostly to good Hellenists), the Perpetual Secretary would habitually come down among his colleagues with a marvellous impromptu translation of some of the Greek bard's finest passages, inspired by all the fire of the glorious original. In this way was born in Villemain's mind the idea of publishing a translation of Pindar, augmented and adorned by his own commentaries and notes. But by degrees as the work progressed, its author found that Pindar was in some measure the impersonation of lyric poetry itself, and he came to the conclusion that any commenting on Pindar must be preceded by a general treatise on lyric poetry since its first accents were heard by the human race. This was, it will be allowed, an arduous undertaking; but rarely has any one been more completely successful. Of all the many works that will carry Villemain's name down to posterity as one of the finest writers and loftiest thinkers of this age, — of all the noble intellectual and moral rules that, spoken from the professor's chair, drew to him the youth of France as with one heart, — of all the monuments to his own fame that this eminent man will leave to his country, — none equal this treatise on Pindar and Lyric Poetry. The book is a poem in itself; and, unlike what usually happens in these cases, it is impossible to conceive of a poet who, after reading it, should not say, "That man has a right to judge us, for our own fire burns in him." Never by any æsthetic writer has mere inspiration been placed so high, — never has the supremacy of enthusiasm over all other sources of human productiveness been so loudly asserted; and it is not only delightful to read the praise of poetry from so eloquent a pen, — it is honorable to our time, that in it should be found a man who, at the period of life when the useful mostly takes the lead of the sentimental, deliberately declares that only to be useful which serves to elevate and ennoble the mind. We are unfortunately obliged to refrain from much quotation, but we call the reader's atten-

* M. Villemain's memory is proverbial. He will at any moment repeat pages of any classical author, of whom one line happens to be quoted.

tion to the following strikingly fine passage, because it contains and illustrates the vital principle of the work: —

"The kind of self-complacent materialism in which the idolaters of a despotic rule would have us believe that a portion of the human race enveloped itself, under the equality of oppression of ancient Rome, never really existed. That slumber of the soul in undisturbed servitude never was, never will be. Setting aside often recurring revolutions, and the other various accidents which more than compensate the advantages of absolute power to its possessor, there existed during the entire period which it is sought to present to us as 'safe from any agitation' a permanently active rebellion of the collective moral sense against tyranny. Under different forms, this was, let it be remarked, an epoch of enthusiasm in action, and of faith carried to heroism. Nor was there ever, in reality, a condition or state of human society established in which all instinct of generous disquietude was extinct, in which dependence in all its shapes was calmly submitted to, or in which a community shut out from every nobler conquest deemed itself content, because its daily subsistence was insured. From over-study of the laws and proclamations of the Cæsars, you come to ignore the few who protested against their empire, you wilfully forget the outcries of the oppressed, their hymns and odes, the lyric outpourings of their indignation. ..... The apparent external repose wherewith despotism and servility together tried to wrap themselves round ancient Rome, was therefore not complete. Enthusiasm lived on still, and its flame burnt purely as ever. ..... This help from above, this immaterial support which was not denied to the pagan world, at the period of its great transformation, shall it then fail us, Christians of the world of this day? Devoted to positive interests, ready for submission to brute force as we are supposed to be, who is there yet among us who will dare assert that the loss of enthusiasm would be a gain? *that the recognition of the uselessness of poetry would be a progress?* and that to the recognition of that uselessness we must inevitably be led by the successive developments attained by whatsoever is tangible, material, in our life? ..... No! this is *not* so, — never can be so: whatever increases the amount of man's power over the exterior world, whatever contributes to double the sum of time that he has to dispose of, or to diminish the obstacle of space, will — *must* — in the end serve to bring the soul back upon itself, and, by delivering the human being from what were hitherto so many external trammels, must isolate him more and more, and oblige him to self-communion. Man, in reality, is great only by those conceptions that spring from his own original thought, and that are born of the strong pulsations of his own inmost heart. ..... Mankind cannot be, and enthusiasm die away."

Upon such self-evident grandeur of both thought and expression, we can have no remark to offer; we simply leave it to the appreciation of the reader, premising only that this is the tone and tendency of the work before us.

The transition is easy from Villemain to Lamartine, and we feel as if we were merely going from one poet to another. Both speak the same language, view men and things from the same elevated point of view, and judge of the same events in the same way. Both — with far more of indulgence than disdain, however — look naturally down upon whatever they have to speak of.

We are among those who regard Lamartine's monthly *Entretiens* as pre-eminently useful to the French public, so long as they treat of contemporary history and personages. The writer himself is too impulsive, too genuinely a poet, to be a first-rate critic; he has too little of acquired knowledge to be a first-rate æsthetic writer; — he would be a dangerously unsafe guide along the purely literary or historical paths of the past. Where knowledge that he has not is absolutely requisite, Lamartine fails; but where he has the necessary familiarity with what he recounts, he is incomparable, and of a usefulness not to be replaced. Wherever he brings his fine poetic sense to bear upon events or upon individuals whereof his own knowledge is sufficient, there he inevitably contributes largely to reform the decrees of the vulgar crowd, to force the narrow-minded, routine-loving, soulless mass of what is called the "reading world" (more deserving of the above epithets in France than anywhere else) into a broader, higher, more really liberal train of thought. In judging of what he knows, Lamartine renders an intellectual and moral service to France, of which the French public is perhaps not aware; and of circumstances in which he himself has been an actor, no historian is worth the poet-orator.

His last three *Entretiens* (the forty-fourth, forty-fifth, and forty-sixth) are, to our mind, inestimable, in the beneficial effect upon public opinion they are likely to produce. The subject of all three is M. Thiers's "History of the Consulate and the Empire." If ever a subject existed on which the French public was in need of some intelligent director and guide, this is one; for all that is showy and mischievous (showily mis-

chievous and mischievously showy), both in the spirit of what is to be written and in the spirit of the man who writes it, — all this calls forth, imperiously and irresistibly, whatever is most vulgar and false in the national mind. There is no subject (unless it may be the Revolution, and that for contrary reasons) on which the French public require so much "setting right" as on the Empire; and there is no writer so likely to "set it wrong," or lead it to exaggerate all its own natural defects, as M. Thiers. This Lamartine has keenly felt, and we know of no definition of Thiers's History that can be at all paralleled with the following: —

"This book records the life of one of those great armed actors in the drama of ages, of whom some say that they are necessary, others (and I am one) that they are fatal, — but of one of those actors who, at all events, are best to be likened to Alexander or Cæsar. This book may perhaps be the book that posterity will consult upon our epoch; because what it contains does necessarily touch upon all the vital questions of our time, — upon religion, philosophy, superstition, despotism, liberty, monarchy, republicanism, legislation, politics, diplomacy, war, nationality, conquest, — in short, upon whatsoever agitates the present and will agitate the future, — upon whatsoever penetrates deepest into the hidden conscience of the human race. This book is the work of one of those minds that are incomplete (all minds are 'incomplete,' because Providence alone has the key to what is perfect), but by one, nevertheless, of the brightest, clearest, sharpest, most studious, most universally 'capable' minds wherewith any author was ever gifted; a mind, too, signally adequate, and corresponding to the general average public mind. This book, in fine, is as remarkable by all it does not, as by all it does, contain.

"What it contains is the collective common-sense of the multitude, assimilated to himself by the writer, and re-transmitted with the very genius of lucidity. What it lacks is the philosophical spirit, and conscience, and statesmanship; what it lacks is to show the genius of morality and right, compelling the genius of mere ambition, of conquest, and of luck.

"In one word, man is everywhere evident in this History, — God is nowhere. M. Thiers's book is a landscape without a sky."

We affirm that thus to have judged M. Thiers and his work is to have done a signal service to France, and we are convinced that all who know that country well will agree with us.